

Members

Rep. Peggy Welch, Chair
Rep. Tiny Adams
Rep. Gloria Goeglein
Rep. Matt Whetstone
Sen. Becky Skillman, Vice-Chair
Sen. Rose Antich
Sen. Mark Blade
Sen. Steven Johnson
John Catey
Garland Ferrell
Frank Fritch
Al Dillon
Richard Dodge
Vernon Jewell
Richard Jones
Douglas Lechner
Jean Paul Lushin
Bill Mansard
Gloria Stephani



COUNTY GOVERNMENT STUDY COMMISSION

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Authority: P.L. 109-1997

MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 13, 2000
Meeting Time: 1:30 P.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington St.,
Room 404
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 2

Members Present: Rep. Peggy Welch, Chairperson; Rep. Gloria Goeglein; Rep. Matt Whetstone; Sen. Becky Skillman, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Steven Johnson; Sen. Rose Antich; Garland Ferrell; Richard Jones; John Catey; Al Dillon; Jean Paul Lushin; Richard Dodge.

Members Absent: Rep. Tiny Adams; Sen. Mark Blade; Frank Fritch; Vernon Jewell; Douglas Lechner; Gloria Stephani; Bill Mansard.

Rep. Peggy Welch, Chairperson of the County Government Study Commission, called the meeting to order and asked the Commission members to introduce themselves.

Rep. Welch stated that the purpose of today's meeting is to receive an update on the functions and duties of county commissioners in Lake County and St. Joseph County.

John Dull, Attorney for the Lake County Commissioners

Mr. Dull gave a brief history of why Lake County has a different county commissioner structure when compared to the other Indiana counties. Mr. Dull stated that the Lake County commissioners

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would like to see the county structure in Lake County changed. He added that if the current county commissioner structure is not changed then statutory changes need to be made so that the Lake County commissioners have contract rights (e.g., guaranteed energy savings contracts) and purchasing rights like county commissioners do in 89 of the 92 counties.

Tom O'Donnell, Lake County Councilman

Mr. O'Donnell stated that in Lake County there is a need for the separation of powers that allows for system of checks and balances. Mr. O'Donnell stated that all seven Lake County councilmen are opposed to any changes in the county commissioner structure in Lake County.

Cindy Bodle, St. Joseph County Commissioner

Ms. Bodle stated that all three of the St. Joseph County commissioners feel that the county commissioner structure in St. Joseph County works well and does not need to be changed.

David Niezgodsky, St. Joseph County Councilman

Mr. Niezgodsky stated that he talked with seven of the nine St. Joseph County councilmen and each of them believes that no changes need to be made in St. Joseph County. He stated that each councilman knows the needs of the district he or she is representing. Mr. Niezgodsky added that the current structure provides for a system of checks and balances.

Senator Frank Mrvan, Representing Lake County

Sen. Mrvan stated that Lake County's current county commissioner structure provides for more representation of the people. He added that the more representation people have the better off they are. Sen. Mrvan stated that there is not a public outcry to change the Lake County structure and that it should be left as it is.

Senator Rose Antich, Representing Lake County

Sen. Antich stated that she has requested a preliminary draft that would change Lake County's structure to be the same as 89 of Indiana's counties. Sen. Antich added that she will take the preliminary draft before the Lake County caucus and then bring the Lake County commissioners and councilman together to discuss the preliminary draft. Sen. Antich stated that the discussions will help her determine whether or not she will introduce the draft legislation.

Katrina Hall, Farm Bureau

Ms. Hall stated that all units of county government need to be looked at. She suggested that tax restructuring should be a part of any changes in county government structure.

Commission Discussion

The Commission members asked questions of the individuals who testified. Based upon discussion by Commission members it was concluded that there needs to be a delineation of power between the Lake County commissioners and the county council.

Rep. Welch asked Commission members to review the recommendations that are contained in the Coalition on Monitoring Public Efficiency and Tax Expenditures (C.O.M.P.E.T.E.) study. Rep. Welch stated she would like for Commission members to be prepared to make recommendations at the next meeting. She stated that the recommendations should be based upon testimony heard during meetings the past three years as well as the C.O.M.P.E.T.E. study.

The next meeting of the County Government Study Commission is September 28, 2000, 10:00 a.m., in Room 431 of the State House.

There being no further business, Rep. Welch adjourned the meeting.